

# PALÆONTOLOGICAL NOTES.

No. IV.\*

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(Plates viii-x, and one map.)

## FOSSIL MARSUPIALS FROM NEW GUINEA.

It is surprising that up to the present there is no record of the finding of fossil marsupials in the large island of New Guinea, which in its recent fauna presents a strong similarity to the Australian continent, a similarity which without doubt obtained also in the Pleistocene and earlier. The existence today of the cassowary, echidna, tree kangaroos, wallabies, and other marsupials on both sides of Torres Strait, indicates that at one time there was land communication between Australia and New Guinea, and it is natural to expect that some of the extinct forms which are of common occurrence in Australia would also be found in the neighbouring island. That they have not previously been recognized there is probably due to the fact that until recently there were no mining, quarrying, or other operations in New Guinea, activities which often result in the discovery of fossil bones.

It was, therefore, with great interest that some fossil bones from the Morobe district, Territory of New Guinea, recently received at the Museum, were examined, particularly when it became apparent that they presented a close resemblance to specimens which are commonly found in Australian superficial deposits of Post-Tertiary age.

These interesting specimens were first brought to our notice by Mr. G. A. V. Stanley, B.Sc., a geologist on the staff of Oil Search Ltd., who had observed a jaw bone, since determined as that of a *Nototherium*, in the office of the Geological Survey at Wau. This specimen, consisting of two mandibular rami, was forwarded to the Museum by Mr. N. H. Fisher, Government Geologist, Territory of New Guinea, who subsequently visited the spot where it was found and examined the occurrence. Mr. Fisher was also fortunate enough to obtain additional material consisting of some fragmentary macropod bones, which he also sent to the Museum. While on furlough in Sydney Mr. Fisher kindly gave me some particulars of the mode of occurrence and also supplied a map from which a sketch map of the district has been prepared.

### Occurrence.

The nototherian mandible was found on the Waiganda or Roaring Creek, a tributary of the Watut River. This river junctions lower down with the Bulolo

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\* For No. III, see RECORDS OF THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, Vol. xviii, No. 7, June, 1932, p. 333.